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# GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

Fact Sheet  
**45**

August 2010

## ***What is a gifted and talented student?***

The Annotated Code of Maryland §8-201 defines a gifted and talented student as “an elementary or secondary student who is identified by professionally qualified individuals as having outstanding talent and performing, or showing the potential for performing, at remarkably high levels when compared with other students of similar age, experience, or environment.” The law recognizes that students may have different types of gifts and talents, such as intellectual ability, excelling in specific academic fields, or high performance capability in creativity, leadership, or the visual and performing arts. These students require different services beyond those normally provided in the regular classroom (§8-202).

## ***What are some characteristics of giftedness?***

Gifted and talented students think and learn differently from their same-age peers in two distinct ways: 1) They’re advanced, or precocious. They learn rapidly, remember more, and can master subject matter or skills at a much higher level, and 2) they exhibit a more complex type of reasoning. These students make unique connections among facts and ideas. They are curious and ask the big, hard-to-answer questions. They are attracted to complex problems and may be sensitive beyond their years to moral and ethical issues.

## ***What types of programs and services are available?***

Differentiated instruction for GT students involves both acceleration and enrichment. *Acceleration* allows students to move rapidly through grade-level material and learn content typically taught at a higher grade. This mastery might be demonstrated on a test. *Enrichment* allows students to explore subject matter more deeply and to use their knowledge in real-world applications. Enrichment is always product or performance-based. Opportunities for Maryland students include early entrance into kindergarten, single-subject or whole-grade acceleration, dual enrollment in college, pull-out enrichment classes, a GT curriculum or curricular units, magnet programs, AP courses, original research, and mentorships.

## ***How are students identified for gifted and talented education services?***

All school systems use multiple ways to identify students’ gifts and talents. In addition to traditional measures of aptitude and achievement, schools may use student observation, student product evaluations, auditions, learning checklists, and gifted behavior rating scales and interviews. Some students may be identified as “twice exceptional,” meaning they are advanced in one area, but struggle in another. For example, a student gifted in science may struggle with writing; another may be gifted in math but struggle with organization. These students may need both special education and gifted education services.

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***How are educators prepared to teach gifted and talented children?***

Just as gifted students need specialized instruction to develop their potential fully, teachers of gifted students need specialized training in that instruction. Just one-third of Maryland school systems employ school-based GT resource teachers who work directly with students and with teachers to deliver services. Instruction for gifted students is most often delivered by regular classroom teachers. Several school systems have formed cohorts with local universities to offer coursework in gifted and talented education. In 2009, the State Board of Education adopted a new teacher certification area for Gifted and Talented Education Specialist which will encourage more teachers to advance their expertise.

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***How can parents support their gifted and talented children?***

No school curriculum can adequately address gifted students' many interests. Parents can encourage their children to join after-school clubs and seek out special Saturday and summer programs which give students a chance to explore their chosen disciplines more deeply, as well as the opportunity to socialize with others who want to do the same. Parents are encouraged to educate themselves about the special needs of gifted children. Ask the local board of education if there is a local parent advocacy group to join. Work with the school PTA and serve on school-based and board of education committees working on gifted and talented issues.

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***What is the structure of gifted and talented programs in Maryland?***

Each local school system's board of education is responsible for funding and managing its gifted and talented education program. The Annotated Code §5-401 requires school systems to report in their Master Plans, submitted annually to the State Board of Education, the system "goals, objectives, and strategies regarding the performance of gifted and talented students." The Maryland State Department of Education provides technical assistance to school systems and sponsors quarterly state briefings, professional development courses, an annual state conference, differentiated curriculum tools, and student programs. The State Superintendent of Schools appoints the Maryland State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Students which meets quarterly with the mission to encourage and support the education of students who are identified as gifted and talented.

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***Where can I get additional information?***

Your local school principal or your local board of education's coordinator of gifted and talented education can provide specific program information.

Contact the Specialist for Gifted and Talented Education at the Maryland State Department of Education at 410-767-0363 or go to [www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/giftedtalented](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/giftedtalented).

For information on giftedness and resources for identifying and nurturing giftedness, go to the National Association for Gifted Children: [www.NAGC.org](http://www.NAGC.org).